



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, July 3 – July 10, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Crews mostly closed up traplines over the Holiday weekend. Fieldwork started back up again early in the week. Boyd and Bahnson were working in the Swan Valley. Bradley was in Granite County.

Laudon and FWP volunteer Edgley made a valiant effort to get a GPS collar out in the Great Bear pack in the Bob Marshall Wilderness area based on reports from the US Forest Service.

On 7/6, FWP retrieved a collared dead wolf on private land in Tom Miner Basin and in the 8-mile pack territory. The animal was completely decomposed, intact and assumed to have been dead for close to a year. The radio collar was not working but further investigation showed the animal (B-173M) was collared in Idaho, fall of 2003, as a two year old in the Soldier Mountain pack territory. Idaho wolf project biologists acquired one location on B-173M before the animal went missing. The collar will be returned to the Idaho wolf project. No sign of trauma was found. Cause of death is unknown.

Flights: Bradley flew several short flights in western Montana to locate packs in her area of responsibility on 6/26, 7/1, 7/6, and 7/7. Asher flew on 7/7.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 7/4, WS investigated a dead calf in the Lost Trail area (Tallulah pack) west of Kalispell. It was confirmed. FWP authorized WS to remove one wolf.

On 7/6, WS investigated 1 injured calf on public land in the Wall Creek area west of the Madison River within the Horse Creek pack territory. WS confirmed that it was injured by wolves. FWP talked with area producers to make sure they were aware of state law / regulations allowing non-injurious

hazing/harassing or take in the act if the wolf is seen chasing or attacking livestock. FWP did not authorize lethal control.

On 7/6, WS investigated 2 dead yearling cattle on private land in the Toadflax pack territory at the south end of the Madison Valley. It was unconfirmed as wolf predation and lightening was suspected as the cause of death. Wolves had fed on the carcasses. FWP did not authorize lethal control.

On 7/6 WS investigated a dead calf on private land southeast of Deerlodge. It had been mostly consumed and was unconfirmed / possible depredation as the feeding pattern was consistent with wolf, but the actual cause of death could not be determined.

On 7/9, WS pulled traps in the Elk Park area after 16 days of effort. No wolf sign was observed and there are no further reports of injured or dead livestock.

On 7/11 FWP pulled fladry from one of the properties in the Martinsdale area that was used around a sheep pasture.

The Blackfoot Challenge and FWP are collaborating on a Range Rider project in the Blackfoot Valley, with special emphasis on the Ovando Mountain pack (one of the founders is a wolf that dispersed from the Swan Valley) and the Elevation Mountain pack. Peter Brown, the rider, reports that he has spent a majority of time riding cattle in close proximity to these packs. Both packs have confirmed reproduction this spring. The packs have seemed to move farther away from cattle as cattle were moved into pastures.

Outreach and Education

FWP gave a wolf project update to the group PERC (Property and Environment Research Center) on July 7. About 25 people attended.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

Bradley detected 2 collars on mortality mode during her flights this week, one in a remote area. FWP Warden Fegely investigated a mortality signal from the DeBorgia pack and retrieved remains. The mortality is under investigation.

Other

NEW -- Delisting Litigation Formally Starts

On June 2, a coalition of 13 groups, represented by the law firm EarthJustice, challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species Act for a variety of reasons. A request for a preliminary injunction (which if granted by the Court, would keep federal ESA protections in place during the litigation) has not been filed at this time. The Greater Yellowstone has also filed a lawsuit challenging the federal delisting decision. The groups will be represented by their own attorney's, respectively, but the cases were consolidated. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will seek to intervene in the Missoula Court on behalf of the State of Montana. Montana supports federal efforts to delist wolves.

Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10th Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan.

Background for Montana

On May 4, gray wolves in Montana were delisted. Conservation and management are guided by Montana laws, administrative rules (ARM 12.9.1301 – 12.9.1305), and the state's federally-approved plan. Wolves in Montana were automatically reclassified to a "species in need of management" statewide on May 4. The gray wolf is protected statewide, though individual wolves may be hazed, harassed, or killed if seen actively attacking, killing, or threatening to kill livestock. Incidents must be reported and each will be investigated. Wolves may also be killed to protect human life. See the FWP wolf web page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions about delisting. The FWP wolf web page also has information about state law and regulations and what livestock owners can do to protect livestock. See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season:

FWP and the FWP Commission continue to prepare for a potential 2009 season. On July 8, the FWP Commission adopted final quotas. FWP recommended and the Commission approved a statewide quota of 75. The statewide quota is distributed across 3 Wolf Management Units (41 in northwest Montana, 22 in western Montana, and 12 in southwest Montana). In addition, FWP recommended and the Commission approved a subunit subquota of two wolves for the North Fork Flathead drainage on the west side of Glacier National Park which applies towards the total quota for WMU 1 of 41. The season structure previously adopted by the FWP Commission is still in place.

At this time, FWP expects to begin license sales on August 17. Additional details will be available in the future as FWP continues preparation.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

Efforts by Senator Tester and others to create a Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Project (HR146 – wolf "reimbursement" bill) continue in Congress. While the bill itself passed both the House and the Senate (which creates the demonstration project), the appropriation process to fund the demonstration project bill continues. HR2996 (the appropriation bill) was passed by the US House on June 26. It passed a key Senate Committee on July 7 and awaits action by the full Senate.

The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.